

REMARKS

In the most recent Office Action dated November 10, 2003, the Examiner has rejected claims 6-21 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over European Patent No. EP0899662A1 to Gold et al., in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,764,972 Crouse et al. The Examiner also rejected claims 22, 24-32, 34-42, and 44-51 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gold et al., in view of Crouse et al., and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,875,478 to Blumenau. Applicants cancel hereby claims 6-22, 24-32, 34-42, and 44-41 without admission and without prejudice.

In addition, the Examiner objected to claims 23, 33, and 43, indicating that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent format to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. To advance prosecution, claims 23, 33, and 43 are hereby canceled, without admission and without prejudice, and rewritten as new independent claims 53, 66, and 79. Therefore, the objection as to claims 23, 33, and 43 is moot, and allowance of new independent claims 53, 66, and 79 as they stand after entry of this amendment is respectfully requested.

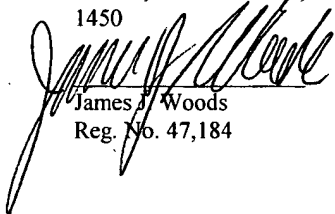
Applicants also add new dependent claims 54-65, 67-78, and 80-88 to more fully claim aspects of the present invention. The dependent claims of the present application contain additional features that further substantially distinguish the invention of the present application over the prior art of record. However, given the applicants' position on the patentability of the independent claims, it is not deemed necessary at this point to delineate such distinctions.

For at least all of the above reasons, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw all rejections and objections, and allowance of all the pending claims

is respectfully solicited. To expedite prosecution of this application to allowance, the Examiner is invited to call the applicants' undersigned representative to discuss any issues relating to this application.

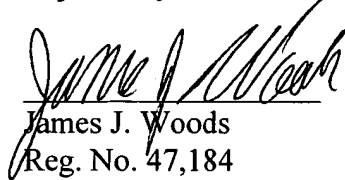
Dated: 5/10/04

I hereby certify that the correspondence attached herewith is being transmitted via First Class Mail to: Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450


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5/10/04
Date

Respectfully submitted,


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